

2015-2016 Annual Report



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Introduction

For the end of Fiscal Year 2015 and the first half of Fiscal Year 2016, the Board of Commissioners worked hard to keep spending lower than usual and to delay capital purchases. Those are the climates in which government offices will often stay complacent but one in which Union County's Communications Department worked hard to continue pressing forward.

Often in the business world, when revenue goes through a down cycle, the focus is more inward and on building value rather than building equity. This is exactly the attitude that Communications took this year, engaging in very targeted spending.

When meeting to plan for FY16, CIO Rollie Hawk's comment to the Board was, "I will be—and my department will be—whatever the County needs me to be in this season." Communications has worked diligently to keep costs down and options open given the future revenue questions we face.

With many unknowns on the horizon regarding State budgets and revenue, this is not a year where we have the kinds of statistics of deployed servers and workstations that we often like to see. Rather, the focus has been on preparing for uncertainty by working to make as many things certain as possible and to make better use of what we have.

The goal of this report is to highlight the progress that has been made over the last year as well as to lay out a vision for the future of Communications within the existing structure of our County's government.

Increased Security

Password Security—Almost every office is consistently using passwords that are unique to users. While a few gaps remain, the majority of our systems have users logging in with their own credentials and at the very least the majority of our specialized systems have their own logins. The days of passwords being shared throughout offices are over. In the future, moving to self-managed passwords is going to be key to establishing a high level of security.

SSL Certificates—All of our email, whether accessed through a desktop client, a phone or a web interface, is now accessed through an SSL-secured connection. This protects not only the contents of email but the credentials used to access it.

Trial Support

Communications continues to provide support as needed to the State's Attorney's office as needed for cases, particularly jury trials. Assisting in the setup of demonstratives and electronic presentations of evidence gives our County a professional look and feel that is unique to a county of our size.

Support is also provided to defense, civil litigants and the Court system itself as directed by the Court, ensuring as much as possible that technical issues do not hinder the rights of any citizen to a fair and speedy trial.

Cost Savings

Termination of an Auto-Renewed Lease—We had a situation this year where a lease agreement had auto-renewed that had no funds appropriated to cover it. Communications was able to successfully terminate that agreement by citing Section 6-1005 of the Illinois Counties Code (55 ILCS 5/6-1005). This is a powerful tool that we can look to implement in similar situations.

Photo Printing—Assessor Kenny Swink would often have to spend time and resources going to Walmart to print out photos at around 25 cents each. By utilizing a new color printer, he can print his assessment file photos for 4 cents each without the hassle and mileage of going across the County to have them developed.

Support of Ambulance Service Cameras—On multiple occasions, Communications has been able to provide support for issues with the Ambulance Service's security cameras. This avoids an hourly rate that would otherwise be paid to an outside technician.

Check Stock—Communications was able to assist former internal auditor Brandi Aden in locating a more efficient source for our check stock. Ms. Aden reported this resulted in a reduction in cost of \$100 per order.

Xerox eConcierge—For a number of small duty multifunction devices, the County is now able to utilize the Xerox eConcierge service which is not only a simpler tool for ordering supplies but has the added benefit of covering maintenance fees on these devices after two orders are placed for that device. In addition to providing supply replenishment for Xerox equipment, Xerox is one of the largest suppliers in the world of toner for HP and Brother equipment so our use of this program could easily be expanded.

FOIA Fees—While Illinois is not among the most advanced states in terms of technology fees associated with Freedom of Information Act requests, it has adopted fees for a few categories of requests. Those fees are able to offset technology expenses as they ultimately go back into our general fund.

Increased Efficiencies

Overhear Form—Communications worked with personnel in the State's Attorney's and Sheriff's offices to develop an electronically fill-able overhear form which has made this routine form more clean and efficient to generate. It's a model likely to be applied to many similar forms.

Tracking Forms—For offices that request it, Communications continues to develop budget tracking forms that allow offices to maintain their own independent tracking of expenses.

Remote Conferencing—Although still not highly used in the County, there have been a number of opportunities to set up remote conferencing with other agencies, witnesses and so forth. This saves a lot of travel time and expenses that would otherwise be incurred.

Animal Control Bills—Communications has taken on the payments of utilities, telephone and Internet for Animal Control. This has resulted in consistent and timely payment of these bills as well as adding more eyes that are watching these expenses.

Routing and Tracking of Communications Bills—After some prompting from our County Administrator, Communications began much more detailed tracking of bills from when they arrive and are due to when checks are requested, printed and mailed. This has allowed for identifying trouble areas such as bills being mailed to other offices and has greatly reduced late bills.

ArcReader Data—Our ArcReader software, which is utilized by multiple offices for mapping data, now gets automated nightly updates of parcel data from our Devnet tax system. This eliminates a very infrequent, manually process from having to accomplish this.

Elevator Operation Video—Communications worked with Maintenance to develop a training video demonstrating how to manually operate the secure elevator in the event of a software malfunction. This eliminates the need to bring in maintenance staff to perform this task in the event of an emergency.

Laptop for Sex Offender Registration—Sex offender registration is now a paper-free process thanks to the repurposing of an old laptop for this specific task.

Remote Access—Several managers now have the opportunity to access office resources via both Remote Desktop and a Virtual Private Network that Communications has deployed. In particular, this has allowed the State's Attorney and his assistants to have access to their case management software from anywhere using their County laptops.

Remote Support—Communications is routinely utilizing GotoAssist software to provide remote support to staff from any location and to any location.

Improved Service and Support

24x7 Telephone System Support—Telephone support was made a priority in the most recent budget. With a 24x7 dispatch center utilizing the telephone system, it only made sense to upgrade the coverage to 24x7. We've been fortunate not to need it thus far but it's there for when we do.

Xerox Implementation—The Xerox implementation in a few offices has not only reduced maintenance costs but improved service and support by reducing the response time greatly. Maintenance on the copier shared by Communications, the Supervisor of Assessments office and the Treasurer's office is now a very manageable \$20 per month and smaller feature printers covered under the eConcierge plan have maintenance covered just by purchasing the toner from Xerox.

Collaborations

Copywriting—One of the more behind-the-scenes services Communications is able to provide to offices is occasional copywriting services thanks to your CIO's background in that area.

Rewiring of Telephones at County Engineer Building—During a decidedly inconvenient week, while deploying case management software, there was some surprise rewiring that needed to be done on the Engineer's telephone system. This was handled in short order with the assistance of Highway Department staff and is the kind of collaboration that should be replicated across our organization whenever possible. The fact that we can provide this service means one less monthly fee to pay for and no need to call in someone to make one-time repairs.

Landscaping Project—Commissioner Bobby Toler, County Administrator Kelly Carter and CIO Rollie Hawk were able to work together to assist a couple of civic organizations in their work to raise funds to beautify our courthouse lawn.

Regional Office of Education Satellite Office—Communications was able to help set up our new ROE satellite office in a cost effective manner by helping to directly provide equipment, software and services to get them up and running in short order.

Engagement with Other Units of Government

U of I Extension Webinar Series—Communications hosted every session of the Local Government webinar series by the Extension Office in the Community Room. This was a great opportunity for shared

learning and discussion. Tangentially, we've been able to make connections with County Administrators and CIOs in other counties thanks to these webinars.

Illinois Counties Information Management Association—Union County is now a member of the ICIMA, a great opportunity to extend beyond our walls to learn about the IT and telecommunications solutions implemented in other Illinois counties.

Karpel Client in Jackson County—There is one other client of Karpel's case management software in Illinois. The fact that it happens to be in Jackson County opens up a lot of possibilities for future collaboration and reduced costs as new features can be implemented across our two similar and geographically close counties.

State Police IT Management—I've had multiple opportunities to meet and discuss with various members of IT management with the Illinois State Police and look forward to continued discussions with them and opportunities to learn from their experience and keep open the doors for future collaboration.

Anna PD—There have been a number of opportunities in the past couple of years to provide advice and consultation to Anna PD and they have always been receptive to it. These are opportunities to take a leadership role in our County but more importantly are opportunities to lean on one another's experience. This kind of informal partnership would be wonderful to see across all of our municipal departments, across municipalities and beyond law enforcement.

Electrical Proposals and Negotiation

For the second year, CIO Rollie Hawk handled electrical proposals and negotiations. This continues a theme we've had in recent years of developing internal expertise within the County and less dependence on outside influencers in decision making. Between the state CMS system, utilizing brokerages and issuing our own RFPs, we have a variety of tools at our disposal for reaching the best possible energy pricing.

Public Engagement

UnionCountyBoards.com—A relatively new initiative, this secondary website is a place to gather and publish records related to boards and committees to which the Union County Board of Commissioners appoints members. It is currently hosting content from the Tourism Board but the vision of the County Administrator and CIO is to expand this to bodies such as the Hospital District Board, the ETSB and so on.

Election Results—On the night of the most recent election, Platinum Elections was plagued with website issues. Once it was realized what was happening, CIO Rollie Hawk worked to mirror Union County's voting results on our website and also sent this information to media contacts in as close to real-time as possible. This was highly appreciated by both the public and local media and helped to mitigate the fallout from this vendor failing to meet expectations.

Intern Clayton Holderfield—Mr. Holderfield is our third intern in the Communications department and is now extending that internship into a second semester. This is a tremendous opportunity for both he and us to partner in shared learning, experience and work. While it is unlikely that every intern will end up in the fields of public policy and/or information technology, every one of them that passes through here will leave with an education in civics they would otherwise be unlikely to receive and will, if nothing else, be a more educated voter in the future.

Press Conference—In what may have been our first official press conference in the new courthouse, we had multiple media outlets present to cover the result of a massive poaching investigation. This was a uniquely Union County event in that it highlighted both our ability to engage the public and media like a larger county while maintaining a casual atmosphere as can only be accomplished in a smaller county.

FOIA Work—The partnership of the State's Attorney and CIO as our County's Freedom of Information Act officers is one that this County can be very proud to have. They have maintained a great track record of responding within the appropriate time—requesting very few extensions—and work diligently to provide the most comprehensive responses possible. Even with an increase of 30% in requests that require formal responses in the last year, consistency has been maintained and expertise in this unique area continues to build. We are entering an era where more and more of the public is conscious of FOIA laws from the federal to local levels and their right to public records and the demands on our FOIA team will only continue to grow.

Noteworthy Deployments

Case Management Software—Fiscal Year 2016 began with the deployment of Karpel's PbK software in the State's Attorney's office. This rapidly moved that office from one that is primarily paper-based to one that has great flexibility in how it works in the office, remotely and in the courtroom. Paired with our VPN deployment shortly after, the State's Attorney and Assistant State's Attorneys have seen a great increase in productivity as a result.

Elections Laptop—In order to comply with a State mandate, a mobile elections station was deployed earlier in the year.

Ambulance Presentation Laptop—A new laptop for presentation and training purposes was recently set up and deployed for the Ambulance Service.

QuickBooks—QuickBooks was deployed in the Sheriff's office in recent months to assist with the tracking of money on a more day-to-day basis. It was also deployed to the County Administrator's office in the last week in order to explore additional options for County billings and accounts receivable processes.

Future Vision

Contingency Budgets—With so much unpredictability as a result of gridlock at the State level, Communications feels it is important to constantly have contingency plans for the event of sudden revenue changes and calls on other Union County offices to do the same. We can either pretend that less than ideal circumstances will never come to us or we can prepare for them in order to mitigate the damage caused to the greatest possible degree.

Reduced Internet Costs—We were able to cut our Internet fees in half a few years ago. Given the current landscape, it's possible this will be able to happen again in the next year. The more offices are agreeable to consolidating services, it is possible to establish not only a less expensive setup but at the same time one with increased redundancy.

Reduced Telephone Costs—As more digital options are available, there are opportunities for reducing our current landline fees. Additionally, on the cellular side, as we have better information on our data usage we have the option to move to per-usage plans rather than the unlimited Federal plans we

currently use, possibly saving considerable money. As coverage from various cellular carriers increases, current carriers will be forced to be more competitive, as well.

A Single Enterprise—A theme you will hear more and more regularly from the CIO and the County Administrator is *one standard*. As is done in larger counties with a longer history of centralized IT and telecommunications, having a single enterprise network with centralized IT services, centralized security, etc. is an ideal that we should strive towards.

HIPAA—The County has a number of challenges it will face just as many private entities are now that HIPAA is being enforced like other federal standards. With a CIO who has experience providing HIPAA consultation and training to the private sector, the County has an opportunity to get up to speed very quickly without the kind of expense that many organizations are facing.

Risk Management, Policy and Reduced Liability—The County has, at times, not developed and implemented policies as rapidly as desired by the leadership. By developing a cross-department risk management team, organizations often find that policy development becomes a more practical and purposeful matter. It increases buy-in from various departments which leads to easier adoption. Policy development from a risk management perspective helps to reduce the skepticism of new policies as everything that is done has an explicit purpose. As voices from across departments go into the development of policies in this manner, there is shared value in the final product.

Reviewing Software Agreements—We are a few years into a number of software and service agreements and also gave some long-term ones that have been maintained. It's time to ask the following questions and determine whether these partnerships need to be maintained or modified:

- Who has been there when we've needed them and who hasn't?
- Which agreements are true *partnerships* and which are just taking taxpayer money?
- Are we utilizing what we are paying for to its fullest potential?
- Are their features we aren't using and could eliminate fees by dropping?

Reorganizing into a Larger Communications Department—There is going to be a time in coming years where bringing more under the umbrella of Communications will be advisable. While maintaining IT and telecommunications under that department and continuing to treat FOIA as an information issue are good starts and should continue, expanding our internship program, bringing GIS under that umbrella as is the case in other counties and perhaps integrating 9-1-1 into Communications in some areas should be evaluated. The County has enough employees but as technology changes they can be utilized in more targeted ways.

Highway Department Software—Communications has been examining some options for modernizing software used in the Highway Department that could also be implemented countywide for job costing, fleet management and other opportunities to increase efficiencies across the board.

Countywide Printing/Copying Agreements—Again in the spirit of *one standard*, rather than handling printing and copying piecemeal within departments, having a unified solution across our enterprise would eliminate a lot of costs and support issues. While this is a very different way of operating than has traditionally taken place in the County, it will eventually be as much of a no-brainer as having a single telephone system or separate electrical agreements in all offices.

Conclusion

Over the last three years, the County has seen more movement in terms of modernizing from a technological standpoint and an organizational standpoint than perhaps in its entire history up to that point. CIO Rollie Hawk is appreciative of the support he has gotten from not only the Board of Commissioners but from the elected offices and appointed offices and looks forward to continued collaboration in the future.